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CANADIAN TEXTILES 1750-1900

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CANADIAN TEXTILES

1750 - 1900

An Exhibition

Harold B. Burnham

Associate Curator, Department of Textiles

Sigmund Samuel Canadiana Gallery

Royal Ontario Museum

University of Toronto

1965

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INTRODUCTION

The first example of Ontario weaving that reached the Royal Ontario Museum was a blue and white overshot coverlet given by Miss Florence McKinnon in 1941, and its pattern appears on the cover of this catalogue. In the years just following, a few other pieces were added, but it was realized that far too little was known of what was made and used in the early days. This was a serious lack in the provincial museum, and it was this that led to the Ontario Textile Project which was launched in the autumn of 1947 at a booth in the Province of Ontario Building at the Canadian National Exhibition. The project was the idea and inspiration of Mrs. Harold B. Burnham, Keeper of Textiles, and she planned the original campaign. The next year, it was taken over by Mrs. K. B. Brett, Curator of Textiles, who ably carried on the research involved for a number of years. More recently, it has become the responsibility of the present writer. At the beginning, the work was supported by grants from the textile industry which permitted two seasons of intensive fieldwork; since then it has been pursued as time and opportunity permitted. In January, 1964, it was expanded to cover Canadian textiles, and a terminal date of 1900 was set. It is realized that this eliminates much of the western part of Canada, but it is hoped that this important area can be included at a later date.

The basic purpose of the Ontario Textile Project was to establish a central file of all information available on the subject. It was not then, and is not now, the acquisition of a collection; this has been incidental. The aims of its successor, the Canadian Textile Project, are the same. It is the preservation of information that would otherwise be lost with the pasing of older generations that remains the primary object.

The information in this catalogue, and the material displayed, are a review of part of what has been learned. Several aspects of the picture are not covered, and many major gaps remain to be filled. No fieldwork has been possible outside Ontario, and the surface of the textile history of the Maritimes Provinces has barely been scratched. A wealth of information both here and in Quebec remains to be gathered. Certain parts of the Ontario scene, such as carpetting, knitting, embroidery, and the early mills, have had to be omitted here due to limitations of space, but all are facets of the research undertaken.

The growth of collections in any museum is dependent on the generosity of donors, and many of the pieces selected for display have reached the Royal Ontario Museum in this way. We are also grateful to the individuals and institutions who have freely lent examples for this exhibition to make it more representative. The names of both donors and lenders appear in the catalogue description that follow, and to all of them the Royal Ontario Museum stands indebted.

THE INDIANS

When the Europeans arrived in Canada, they found that the Indians of this country possessed many fully developed skills of high artistic order. Using the materials available, they made clothing, and other articles of finely dressed skins. Some were beautifully decorated with painting using natural colours and pigments, others with embroidery in porcupine and bird quills, or moose hair. The practice of fine plaiting was widespread using sinew, skin thongs, the hair of buffalo or mountain goat, the inner bark of cedar, slippery elm, or basswood, and the bast fibres obtained from the stems of nettles, swamp milkweed, indian hemp, and other plants. Shell beads, and small shells such as dentalium, were highly valued, and used for decorative purposes. The early contacts with Europeans brought trade goods including cloth and beads, usually expensive and of good quality, and they added a further incentive for the Indian women to exploit their inherent skills. The high standards achieved with these limited resources, before the overwhelming impact of mass-produced goods in the middle of the nineteenth century, were amazing, but are seldom remembered.

The decorative styles evolved by the Indians varied from area to area of the country. The familiar and unique style based on totemic forms dominated the art of the Pacific Coast, and a geometric style also occured in the southern part of British Columbia. Both small-scale geometric and stylized floral forms are found among the Indians of the Yukon and Mackenzie River basins. Across the Plains, a bold geometric style is found in much work, and realistic painting that is usually narrative telling the exploits of the owner. More variety is found in the Eastern Woodlands, the area stretching from the Prairies to the Atlantic Seabord:geometric, curvo-linear, and stylized floral designs all flourished.

A number of natural dyestuffs were used in a standard colour range: red, yellow, blue, green and black. The clarity of the results is attested in a number of seventeenth-century French reports on Canada where the brilliance of the red is particularly praised. Most of the sources were wild plants and bushes: alder, ladies bedstraw, goldthread and many others were collected and used. These traditional dyeing skills were lost in the latter half of the nineteenth century with the introduction of chemical dyes.

As is only to be expected, the arrival of traders was accompanied by the introduction of trade goods. In addition to blankets and guns, cloth and beads were standard articles of trade. It was, in fact, the deliberate policy of the fur companies to persuade the Indians to adopt cloth for clothing in place of the traditional furs and skins. With the advent of better tools, and more tractable materials, the quality of Indian workmanship rocketed to new heights. Using needle and thread instead of awl and sinew, and working with cloth rather than skin, the women's skills were given full scope. In making the change, it was only natural that the styles of decoration originally used were transferred to the new media. The fine ribbon appliqué, superbly sewn, derives from the geometric motifs that existed on fur robes and other garments. Patterns of all styles, whether painted or worked in quills or moose hair, were carried over into beadwork. A more naturalistic floral style seems to have developed under contact influence, and appears most strongly in items made in Quebec for sale to Euro-Canadians, and often under their direction.

A high quality of trade goods was demanded by the Indians, and the early records of The Hudson's Bay Company reveal the troubles caused by the shipment of inferior articles. The Indians could and did assess the difference in quality of the items offered. An eighteenth century letter from Quebec records that the blankets from Languedoc were of too poor quality to be traded. It states that the Indians had discovered that by burning off a small section of the nap, they could examine the density and type of the threads. By this time, The Hudson's Bay Company was maintaining a constant standard, and the writer states that the quality of the blankets offered by the English was what was required to attract a successful trade for the coveted beaver skins.

No true weaving existed among the Indians in any part of Canada, but various time-consuming plaiting techniques were of great importance. These reached their highest development on the Pacific Coast in the blankets and bands made by the Salish tribes of southern British Columbia, the Tshimsian in the northern part of the province, and the Tlingit in the Alaskan Panhandle. Much of this was done using mountain-goat wool which was highly prized, and reserved only for the best work. The Salish raised small white dogs which were sheared at intervals, and yarn was spun from the hair. As the dog hair had a rather harsh quality, it was often mixed with other softer materials such as bird down, milkweed or fireweed fluff to make it softer. Only a limited range of dye stuffs was used on the West Coast: a lichen, wolf moss, for yellow, verdigris from native copper for green, and hemlock bark or burial in iron-impregnated mud for black. With the advent of trading ships, the red, green and blue wools that were made available were readily

accepted, and are found in much of the Old Salish work that has survived.

Among the Tshimsian on the Nass River in northern British Columbia, narrow bands were woven using a rigid heddle, but it is not known whether this tool was indigenous or a result of missionary contact. Rigid heddles made of birch bark were certainly used on the west coast of Hudson Bay in the early eighteenth century for making beaded garters of imported woollen yarns. A similar tool of bark or skin which actually served only to space the threads was used for making narrow woven bands of dyed porcupine quills. This practice originally extended from the Yukon and Mackenzie Rivers, across the Plains and the Eastern Woodlands to the Atlantic Seabord, but by the present century it only survived in the far north.

The majority of the items of Indian workmanship chosen for this exhibition were made prior to 1850 before these arts declined. Some are made solely of indigenous materials, some are made of trade goods, and others show a marriage of the two. It is hoped that they will act as a reminder of the artistic skill and achievement that once existed from sea to sea in Canada.

1. DANCE GARMENT, shoulder blanket of mountain-goat wool with stylized motifs. The technique is a complex twining worked over vertical threads which hung from a horizontal bar. The upper edge is bound with sea-otter fur. The colour range is limited: natural, yellow, green and black. Blankets of this type were made in the northern coastal areas for ceremonial use. Among the Tshimsian, the art died out about the middle of the nineteenth century, and examples of their work are rare. Among the more northerly Tlingit, similar blankets with totemic designs have continued to be made up to the present day.

   Tshimsian, Nass River, Northern British Columbia, 1830-1840
   927.37.142

2. MOUNTAIN-GOAT WOOL BLANKET, made on a two-bar frame of simple construction. The natural loops at both ends are the results of a special warping arrangement used by the more southerly Indians of British Columbia. The red wool forming part of the frame around the central field was obtained by trade.

   Coast Salish, Southern British Columbia, mid-19th century
   965.35.43
   Gift of Mrs. W. Wray Barraclough

3. DANCE APRON, made of narrow bands sewn together. The natural shade is mountain-goat wool, the red and blue are imported yarns obtained through trade. Thimbles are attached to the ends of the braided fringe. These were an early and popular article of trade frequently used for decorative purposes.

   Tshimsian, Nass River, Northern British Columbia, mid-19th century 927.37.125

4. PATTERNED BAND, woven of mountain-goat wool and imported coloured yarns. The warp is nettle fibre.

   Coast Salish, Southern British Columbia, early 19th century 948.44.1

5. WOMEN'S LEGGINGS, with polychrome beading in stylized floral designs on woollen cloth.

   Kutchin, Fort McPherson, Mackenzie River Area, about 1900 920x78.2

   The Wycliffe College Collection

6. WALL POUCH, with three pockets, decorated with woven quill bands and silk embroidery. The edge was originally trimmed with white rabbit fur.
   Made for sale to Euro-Canadians.

   Eastern Plains, possibly Manitoba, about 1840 N.S. 36421

7. MAN'S LEGGINGS, made of blue and scarlet broadcloth with ribbon appliqué and fine beading.

   Cree-Ojibwa, Northern Ontario, 1825-1850 916.22.3

8. QUILL-WOVEN BAND with small-scale geometric patterns. The colours were obtained from modern chemical dyes.

   Athapascan, Mackenzie River, about 1900 955.177.5

9. QUILL-WOVEN BAND, with small-scale geometric patterns. The colours were obtained from modern chemical dyes.

Athapascan, Mackenzie River, about 1900 956.121.20

10. QUILL-WOVEN BAND, with bold geometric motifs. The dyes used were native ones obtained from plants.

Plains, Western Canada, 19th century 955.177.9

11. PRISONER CORD, plaited of slippery elm or basswood fibres dyed black, and decorated with porcupine quills and moose hair dyed red, possibly with alder bark.

Iroquois, probably Mohawk, early 19th century 918.35.1
Gift of Mr. Frank Eames

12. BEADED SASH (ceinture perlé). Beaded diagonal plaiting with interlocking of threads to effect changes of colour. Made of four narrow bands sewn together. The white beads were threaded on the yarns, and worked in as required.

Huron, Quebec, about 1840
Lent by The National Museum of Canada

13. TOBACCO POUCH, deerskin with quill-woven bands. This was picked up by Dr. Cyrus Sumner of Lincoln County following the Battle of Detroit in August, 1812.

Eastern Woodlands, Ontario, early 19th century
Private collection

14. CEREMONIAL SHOT POUCH. The geometric motifs of the shoulder band are derived from the painted designs of Naskapi caribou - skin coats. The embroidered floral ornament on the flap is said to represent the owner's heart as revealed in a dream.

Naskapi, Barren Ground Band, north-eastern Labrador
958.131.131

15. MEDICINE BAG OF CHIEF SHINGWAUK. Beaded diagonal plaiting. Shingwauk or Shinkwaukonce was a Chippewa war chief who fought in the War of 1812, and was present at both The Capture of Michilimakinac and The Battle of Queenston Heights.

Chippewa, Garden River, Ontario, early 19th century
911.3.75

The Oronhyatekha Collection

16. WAR DANCE GARTER OF CHIEF SHINGWAUK, woven and beaded.

Chippewa, Garden River, Ontario, early 19th century
911.3.77

The Oronhyatekha Collection

17. BELT with couched bird-quill ornament. This was given to John Fothergill by Captain Mohawk of the Rice Lake Band of Mississaga Indians about 1819.

Mississaga, Rice Lake, Ontario, about 1819 HD 15390
Gift of Mr. James Baillie

18. SHOULDER POUCH of Chief John Tecumseh Henry. Deerskin embroidered with dyed porcupine quills.

Ojibwa, Ontario, about 1840 HD 254
The Oronhyatekha Collection

19. BLANKET, of red woollen cloth with ribbon appliqué. In use this would have been further decorated with small silver brooches.

Iroquois, probably Mohawk, 1790-1795 911.3.79
The Oronhyatekha Collection

20. WOMEN'S LEGGINGS, or red, and of green woollen cloth with fine ribbon appliqué. The patterns are derived from the painted designs that were used on skin garments.

Ottawa, Manitoulin Island, Ontario, about 1750
936.54.1 and 2
Gift of Mr. Joe Peltier

21. WOMAN'S SKIRT, of fine dark blue broadcloth with ribbon appliqué. The materials for this skirt were presented to Chief Kiagasis for his wife by order of George III. The patterns are derived from the painted designs that were used on skin garments.

Chippewa, Algoma, Ontario, about 1793 911.3.78
The Oronhyatekha Collection

22. WOMAN'S BEADED HOOD, of dark blue broadcloth, showing the quadrate floral patterns carried over from painting on caribou skin. The beading is sewn with fine sinew rather than thread, and the beaded fringe is worked on a strip of finely slashed skin.

Cree-Ojibwa, Northern Ontario, 1800-1820 916.22.2

23. SAMPLE OF WRAPPED QUILL, worked on split pairs of leather thongs. The motif is said to be The Thunderbird of the Algonkins. Although late in date, this sample shows traditional Indian materials and techniques.

Ojibwa, Baptiste Lake, Ontario, 19th century, 2nd half
HD 16387

24. QUILLED BIRCH BARK MAT, given as a wedding present to Mrs. George H. M. Johnson of Chiefswood, near Brantford, by the Indians of Lorette in 1854.

Huron, Lorette, Quebec, about 1854 HD 12686
The Chiefswood Collection

25. ORNAMENT with quill-woven bands. Ornaments of this type were used on garments. They were valued, and transferred to new garments when the old ones were discarded.

Eastern Woodlands, Southern Ontario, early 19th century
Gift of Miss Augusta Jarvis 965.78.1

26. TABLECLOTH, black broadcloth embroidered with moose hair in satin stitch and split stitch. The larger floral motifs are separately worked in french knots and applied. This is an naturalistic floral style that developed under French influence for sale to Euro-Canadians. In earlier examples, the applied flowers are sometimes worked on birchbark.

Huron, Quebec, about 1840
Lent by The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

QUEBEC

In Quebec during the seventeenth century, cloth of all kinds from heavy woollens to fine silks was normally imported from France. From the records of the period, there appears to have been a disinterest in the domestic crafts on the part of Canadians, probably because they were too occupied in clearing the land, and defending themselves from hostile Indian attack. Even the tools that would have been used for home production of textiles were scarce, and are very seldom mentioned in the inventories of personal effects of this period. Although the cultivation of hemp and flax met with a certain success, Vaudreuil and Bégon reporting in 1703 to the Ministre de la Marine said that there was a lack of weavers to utilize the harvest. As the eighteenth century progressed, a need for domestic goods seems to have developed, and several weavers are known to have been working in the Montreal area bout 1740; their production seems to have been limited to yardage for wearing apparel. From the second half of the eighteenth century and throughout, the nineteenth, there was a steady increase in the amount woven at home for domestic use. This production was dying out by the 1930's when it was revived through government action as one of the programmes that has led to the flourishing craft movement found in Quebec today.

The older looms used in this province seem to have been of the simplest type with only two shafts which limited their patterning capacity. To overcome this, two techniques, boutonné and à la planche, were used along the shores of the Lower St. Lawrence in weaving coverlets and curtains which show the innate sense of beauty possessed by the women of rural Quebec. A la planche, either alone or combined with boutonné, was used in Charlevoix County and Isle aux Coudres on the North Shore. In this technique, openings in the warp threads were formed by inserting a narrow board (planche) behind the shafts. When this was turned on edge, the shuttle could be thrown through this special shed producing pattern bands of long coloured floats. Sometimes only one pattern shed was formed in this way, but two were more usual.

Boutonné flourished on both sides of the river. In Charlevoix County and Isle aux Coudres, it was known as "paresseuse boutonnue" or idly twisted knots. Examples, more sophisticated in style, are known from Kamouraska and Rimouski Counties on the South Shore. The motifs are formed by small loops of weft rising above the surface of the cloth. Whenever these are required, a shot of heavier weft is laid in, and drawn up in accordance with the pattern, either free hand, or over a guage of some kind, usually a small rod. After two or three shots of ground have been woven, the process is repeated.

This is a method of patterning that can only be done by hand, and is a technique that was known in Egypt four thousand years ago. Later examples from the same part of the world are often to be seen in Coptic textiles of the early centuries of the Christian era. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was used for the gold loops known as "bouclé d'or" that enriched many of the sumptuous velvets woven in Italy and Spain. In more modern times, coverlets technically resembling those produced along the lower St. Lawrence were to be found in Spain, in Normandy and Brittany in France, and in Louisiana, the old French colony of the southern United States.

The range of yarns found in both these types of coverlets shows what was available, and the economy with which they were combined and used: homegrown and handspun linen, handspun wools dyed with vegetable dyes, and imported cotton thread and candlewick. Narrow strips of rag were often used as weft, a widespread practice when cloth was scarcer and more expensive than it is today. In Quebec, these strips are known as catalogne, a term probably descended from "couvertures de Castelonge", the Catalonian blankets that are mentioned from time to time in The Jesuit Relations as an article of trade in the early seventeenth century. Some of the dyes were imported, indigo for blue, and the south-american woods such as cam-wood for red. Others were obtained from local sources; barks of certain trees were used for various shades of brown and grey, and onion skins were a standard source for yellow.

Another outstanding product of Quebec were the diagonally plaited worsted sashes or ceintures flêchées, with their boldly coloured patterns reminding one of rows of arrow heads. These bright sashes were a standard article of wear for the habitant and woodsman, and were popular articles of trade with the Indians of Western Canada. The best known type is that with zig-zag lines associated with L'Assomption not far from Montreal where a cottage industry for their production existed until after the middle of the nineteenth century. The colour changes producing the stripes were effected by interlocking threads of different colours where they met, and changing their direction. Other types of patterns were produced elsewhere in Quebec. One called "à flamme" derived its name from its flamelike patterns;another, usually classed with ceintures flechees, lacks the characteristic zig-zag lines, and the pattern consists of rows of interlocking lozenges.

The technique of diagonal plaiting is a manual one done entirely with the fingers. Narrow bands and tapes of this type were widely made and used in many countries of northern Europe.

Checked patterns occur frequently, but none of these examples seem to show the great width, and the interlocking change of direction of the threads found in the sashes from Quebec. These aspects of the technique are found in the beaded plaiting of the Indians of the Eastern Woodlands. Wide bands, often with differently coloured borders, were made by a number of tribes in Ontario and New York State, and fragments are known from archeological finds that pre-date European influence. Interlocking in narrow bands, usually sewn together to make a wider sash, is found among both the Hurons and the Micmacs. If the French did take over the techniques from the Indians, there is no question but that they made it individually their own.

Other aspects of the textile arts are known from Quebec. Appliquéd and pieced quilts of very good quality were made in many areas. At least through the nineteenth century, shawls, blankets, and yardage for clothing were all woven, but much of it was used, and little appears to have survived. Overshot coverlets, a technique which will be described more fully later, require a loom with four shafts, and occur particularly in areas of Scottish and English settlement, such as the Eastern Townships. It seems probable that this technique was introduced from New England, and possibly from Scotland, taken over by the French, and adapted for their own needs.

27. FLAME-PATTERNED SASH (ceinture à flamme), diagonally plaited.
Probably Quebec, early 19th century
Lent by The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

28. ARROW SASH (ceinture flêchée), diagonally plaited.

Quebec, probably L'Assomption, early 19th century
Gift of Mr. E. R. Rolph 948.57.12

29. ARROW SASH (ceinture flêchée) of unusual type, diagonally plaited. In this example, the pattern is formed of interlocking lozenges, rather than zig-zag lines.

Quebec, mid-19th century 951.23
Gift of Mrs. G. Craig

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30. ARROW SASH (ceinture flêchée) with unusual colouring, diagonally plaited.

Quebec, mid-19th century 943.5.2
Gift of Mrs. John N. Holt

31. ARROW SASH (ceinture flêchée), diagonally plaited.

Quebec, probably L'Assomption, mid-19th century 953.14.1
Gift of Mrs. Frank Pullen

32. COVERLET with polychrome boutonné borders and à la planche bands. Some of the cottons strips (catalogne) used in this coverlet are early nineteenth-century copper-plate cottons.
Quebec, Isle aux Coudres, about 1835
Lent by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Montreal

33. COVERLET with boutonné borders in indigo blue wool. Catalogne ground.

Quebec, Isle aux Coudres, mid-19th century
Lent by The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

34. BOUTONNE COVERLET, woven of bleached handspun linen by Mme. Albertine Caron.

Quebec, St-Simon-de-Rimouski, about 1865 963.88
Gift of Miss D. J. Grant

35. BOUTONNE COVERLET, handspun wool with polychrome patterns.

Quebec, probably Kamouraska County, 19th century 2nd half
963.186

36. BOUTONNE COVERLET, woven of cotton with pattern in candlewick.

Quebec, Isle aux Coudres, 19th century, 2nd half
Lent by The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

37. BOUTONNE COVERLET, woven by Mme. Nelsie Laforest. The ground is cotton and catalogne on a handspun linen warp; the patterns are brocaded in coloured wools.

Quebec, Isle aux Coudres, about 1870
Lent by The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

38. TABLECLOTH, cotton with overshot pattern in half-bleached linen.

Southern Quebec, about 1900
Lent by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Montreal

39. OVERSHOT COVERLET, indigo blue wool pattern on white cotton ground.

Quebec, Eastern Townships, about 1850
Lent by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Montreal

40. OVERSHOT COVERLET or TABLE COVER, woven of hand-spun linen and cotton strips (catalogne).

Southern Quebec, about 1900
Lent by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Montreal

41. APPLIQUED QUILT, with pattern in green cotton on a white ground. Made by Marie-Esther-Anne Raymond (Mme. R. P. Fauteux) at the age of seventeen. The sewing in this quilt is of remarkable quality.

Quebec, Montreal, about 1840
Lent by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Montreal

42. APPLIQUED QUILT, with wreaths of flowers in red and green cotton prints on a natural ground.

Quebec, Percé, Gaspé County, 1840-1850
Lent by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Montreal

43. OVERSHOT COVERLET, with pattern in light and dark brown wools on a cotton ground. From a United Empire Loyalist family who settled in the Eastern Townships.

Quebec, Compton County, about 1850
Lent by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Montreal

44. OVERSHOT COVERLET, with pattern in red and indigo blue wools on a cotton ground. From a Scottish-Canadian family.

Quebec, about 1860
Lent by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Montreal

45. SHAWL, checked twill in natural and indigo wool. The wool was raised, spun and woven at St-Charles, south of Quebec.

Quebec, about 1810 961.112.1
Gift of Miss Ninette Lachance

THE MARITIMES AND ONTARIO

The settlement patterns of the Maritime Provinces and Ontario show similarities. Loyalists and other settlers from the United States, immigrants from England, Scotland, and Ireland, and, in Ontario, communities of German origin mainly from Pennsylvania and New York State, have all made their contribution to the textile history of the districts in which they settled. Much research remains to be done before we know the original sources of the techniques used, although the origin of most of those from the German communities is already clear.

In the early days of Ontario before 1800, flax was the one fibre that could be grown, processed, and used as yarn. Sheep were scarce, and a number of early accounts relate how hazardous it was to raise them when wolves and other predators were plentiful. Even as late as the 1850's their ravages were not unknown in the prospering communities of the Niagara Peninsula. Cotton was imported, at first probably in a raw state and spun by hand. With the establishment of mills in New England in about 1790, and in northern New York State early in the nineteenth century machine-spun yarns became available. Those found in early examples of Ontario weaving appear to have been imported as singles, and were plied by hand on a spinning wheel when required for stronger threads. This held true until about the middle of the nineteenth century when machine-plied yarns became common. It is the combination of plied warp yarns and finer singles weft, with patterns of richly dyed handspun wool, that gives many of the coverlets their distinctive character.

The picture in the Maritime Provinces seems likely to have been similar to that in Ontario. Settlement in this part of Canada preceded that in Ontario by a generation or more. Flax was early an important crop, and in 1775 the returns for Pictou County show that 34,000 lbs. had been raised in that year. Considering that Pictou had been settled by Rhode Islanders only in 1767, followed by Scots in 1773, this production is impressive. The cotton yarns found in woven pieces from the Maritimes are usually finer than those from Ontario. The reason for this is probably their source. On the Atlantic seabord they would come from New England, while in Upper Canada they would have come from the Mohawk Valley in northern New York.

Many yards of linen were woven in both these parts of Canada for household use and for clothing. Much of it was plain, but patterned pieces, usually quite simple in type, are found in towels and

table linens. Woollen materials, sometimes plain, often checked and striped, were made for the warm clothing that was so necessary before the days of central heating. Little of this has survived in its original form, and in the course of seventeen years only two dresses, both of the 1860's, have come to the attention of the Royal Ontario Museum. After being well worn, and possibly cut down for smaller members of the family, the good parts were made into warm patchwork quilts. It is from this source that most of our knowledge of these simple but beautiful materials has been gleaned. Many blankets, both plain and patterned, were produced. The width that could be woven was limited to the stretch of the weaver's arms, and it is in these blankets, and the coverlets described, that we find the centre seam characteristic of the double-width articles that were woven by hand.

Coverlets are the things that have been treasured, and have survived. By far the most frequent is the overshot type that was woven throughout English-speaking Canada in the early days. The original source of the technique are not known, and needs to be investigated. One source was certainly the United States where it was widely used in colonial and later times, but its origin there is also lost. In these coverlets, floats of varying length, usually of dyed wool, form geometric patterns on a plain white ground. Among those examined from Ontario, the ground has always been cotton, but, in the early days, linen may also have been used here as it was in The Maritimes. It is these coverlets that would have been within the capacity of the home weaver who had also prepared, spun and dyed the woollen yarns with loving care. The overshot coverlets from Ontario usually have a border down each side, and across the lower edge; in those examined from Quebec and The Maritimes, this is normally missing, and the main pattern extends from one side to the other.

The other types of coverlets that have been found require more complex equipment, and come from the more firmly established and prosperous districts. Overshot coverlets requiring eight or more shafts are in this class, and turn up in widely scattered areas. Another type, known as "summer and winter" occurs rarely, and is reversible. On the "summer" side, they show half-tone motifs on a coloured ground, and on the "winter" side, coloured motifs on a half-tone ground.

It is in the communities of German origin in Ontario that the richest range of techniques has been found, particularly in the Mennonite settlements in the Niagara Peninsula, and York and Waterloo Counties, all prosperous farming districts. These were woven on complex looms with from twelve to thirty-two shafts requiring highly developed skills, and could only have

been the work of professional weavers. The origins of most of the styles can be traced back to early German pattern books, and to old examples known to have been woven in the fatherland. The complex twills showing intricate patterns of chevrons and lozenges, the twill diaper with contrasting blocks produced on the same principle as linen damask, and the star and diamond with its eight-pointed stars and lozenges are all found. Another type that occurs here, but also in other districts, is the double-cloth coverlet in which two separately woven layers of cloth change position as required to produce the pattern.

Coverlets with realistic patterns are the most spectacular of all that were woven by hand, and all of these are the work of professional craftsmen. For centuries, the drawloom was the only one used for weaving complex figured patterns. It is known to have been used in the United States in the early years of the nineteenth century to weave richly patterned coverlets, and there is a possibility that it may also have been used in Ontario. One of the disadvantages of the drawloom was that its operation required at least two skilled workmen, and, during the eighteenth century in France, various inventors attempted to produce a mechanical device that would make its operation less costly. Success was achieved by Charles-Marie Jacquard of Lyon in 1806, and the patterning principle discovered by him, when perfected, gradually spread throughout the western world. An attempt was made about 1826 to establish a silk mill at Germantown near Philadelphia using the new machines. By 1828, the venture was bankrupt; the jacquards were bought up by experienced weavers who realized their potential, and inaugurated a new phase of coverlet weaving. With the new equipment the designs were no longer limited to variations on a set number of simple geometric units that could be combined to form a pattern. Realistic patterns, particularly groups of flowers of which four roses was always the most popular, met with immediate acceptance. It was quite simple with this complex equipment to weave the date, the name or initials of the person for whom the coverlet was woven, or sometimes the weaver's own name or sign in the corners. Although found in various parts of the country, production of these coverlets seems to have been limited to certain districts in Ontario: the Niagara Peninsula, the south-western part of the province, Waterloo County, and around Markham in York County. The earliest date so far found is 1834, and comes from Dundas in Wentworth County; the latest, from Southwestern Ontario, is 1902. The early examples show a contrast of white cotton, and dyed wool, usually indigo blue, but occasionally red. As time passed colours were combined in bands, and with the advent of chemical dyes in the 1860's,

the use of colour went rampant, and a whole gamut may be found in one coverlet. With the establishment of weaving mills in the second half of the nineteenth century, coverlets resembling the handwoven ones of the period were produced, but these may be distinguished by the fact that they have no centre seam.

The names of a number of professional handweavers in Ontario have been uncovered. It was to these craftsmen that the housewife or young girl took her spun and dyed wool, and made her choice from his pattern book. Many of them farmed in the summer, and worked at their craft in the winter. Samuel Pentland whose complete weaving equipment is in the Royal Ontario Museum was of Irish origin. He first settled on Amherst Island near Kingston, and about 1840 moved to Nile near Goderich in Huron County. He was a plain weaver whose production was limited to yardage and overshot coverlets. Samuel Fry who lived in Clinton Township, Lincoln County, is the one whose work is best documented. His mother's father had been a weaver, and it is likely that she also knew the craft. As a boy, Samuel Fry showed an interest in it, and when he grew older, he was sent down to Pennsylvania, where his family had come from, to be properly trained. When he returned home, he advertised his skills, and one of his original handbills of 1836 is still extant. He continued weaving throughout his life. His pattern book shows the range of the work he was prepared to undertake: yardage, blankets, and various complex coverlets, twill diaper, double-cloth, and star and diamond. His account book shows that most of his dealings were with his friends and neighbours on a barter basis. His brother-in-law, Moses Grobb, lived not far away, and was also a farmer as well as a weaver of simple yardage, and later of jacquard coverlets from the early 1850's until around 1870. Another jacquard weaver in adjacent Louth Township was Wilhelm Armbrust who wove patterned coverlets from 1834 to 1853. His work has not yet been definitely identified, and its identification is a research project that is currently in hand. John Campbell of Komoka in Middlesex County wove jacquard coverlets in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and both his loom and his account book have survived. Two brothers, W. and J. Noll worked in Petersburg in Waterloo County around the 1870's, and made a practice of weaving their name and address in the lower right hand corner of their products.

The advent of the power loom that gave rise to the textile industry of today, and the import and production of mass-produced materials, steadily drove the traditional handweavers out of business. In Ontario, and probably in other parts of the country as well,

their final resort was the weaving of the familiar rag rugs and carpetting. This is one aspect of their work with which the machine could not compete.

Quilts, both pieced and appliquéd, were made throughout the English-speaking parts of Canada. Many show traditional patterns, but a few are original designs conceived by the makers. It was not unusual for a young girl to piece a number of quilt faces in patterns that appealed to her, and when she became engaged her friends and relations would gather together at quilting bees to back and complete them so that they would be ready for use in her new home. Very few of them are dated, and the tradition of their age can only be confirmed by the cotton prints and other materials that are used in them. Many quilt and overshot coverlet patterns had descriptive names, but those used in Ontario have generally been forgotten. It is necessary to turn to the records gathered earlier in the United States to know what many of them may have been. The name of a pattern often varies from district to district and the same name was equally applied to different patterns on a regional basis. Many are descriptive, some have the romance of dreams, and a few record important political events. "Wreath of Flowers", "Rose of Sharon", and "Flower Basket" occur among appliquéd quilts; "Irish Chain", "The Delectable Mountains", "Carpenter's Wheel", and "Flying Geese" are found among pieced ones. The names of the coverlet patterns are even more variable, but "Whig Rose", "Blooming Leaf", "Lover's Knot", and "Napoleon's March" are typical; "Flowers of Edinburgh" is found in Samuel Fry's pattern book.

Much has been said and written about the use of native vegetable dyes in pioneer times. Few of the natural dyestuffs that were available had any great strength, and one thing is certain: as soon as the more concentrated imported colouring agents could be bought, they were used. Most of the yarn that was dyed was wool. Neither cotton nor linen take colour easily and were normally used in natural shades. Many settlers brought the necessary technical knowledge with them, and it was to the known dyes, rather than the unknown, that they naturally turned. The predominant imported colour, and one of the most permanent known, is indigo blue. The preparation of an indigo vat was a task that took time and experience, but the results fully justified the efforts. Various shades of red took second place. It has always been thought that madder was the most likely source, or possibly cochineal, but early advertisements and store accounts show that it was the south-american dye-woods, and particularly camwood, that were available. Shades of black were obtained by using various dark agents combined with copperas or an iron mordant, but these are usually corrosive. They were not popular; colour to brighten an everyday life was more needed. The only local

source that was utilized seems to have been onion skins for the rich yellows sometimes found, and they were also used to top-dye blue yarn to obtain green. Black walnut, native to southern Ontario, probably supplied brown, but it is a shade that occurs less frequently than the others. All these soft colourings that blend so well give beauty to the early textiles of this country.

46. JACQUARD COVERLET, "Four Roses", blue and white, woven for Nancy Binkley, Dundas. This is the earliest dated coverlet that has yet been found in Ontario.

    Ontario, probably Niagara Peninsula, dated 1834
    Lent by Miss Florence Lyons L953.8.2

47. JACQUARD COVERLET, blue and white, woven for E. A. S. (Elizabeth Anne Secord), St. David's. This may have been woven by Wilhelm Armbrust of Louth Township, Lincoln County.

    Ontario, Lincoln County, dated 1842
    Lent by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Montreal

48. JACQUARD COVERLET. This pattern of four lilies, sometimes called "The Lilies of France" was the only one that challenged the four roses in popularity. This example was originally blue and white, but was dyed brown for use as a curtain.

    Ontario, dated 1839 951.80
    Gift of Dr. and Mrs. N. L. Burnette

49. JACQUARD COVERLET, blue and white with pattern of birds. Woven for E. F. possibly by Wilhelm Armbrust, Louth Township, Lincoln County.

    Ontario, Lincoln County, dated 1848 963.125
    Gift of Mrs. Macdonald Munns

50. JACQUARD COVERLET, blue and white, with pattern of stylized flowering trees. Woven for Sarah Carpenter.

    Ontario, Lincoln County, dated 1856 965.24

51. JACQUARD COVERLET, red and white medallion and floral patterns. Woven by W. and J. Noll, Petersburg.

Ontario, Waterloo County, about 1870 965.66
Gift of Mrs. G. T. Cooke

52. JACQUARD COVERLET, blue and white, woven for Jessie Campbell by her brother John Campbell of Komoka.

Ontario, Middlesex County, about 1870 949.154
Gift of Mr. John Campbell

53. JACQUARD COVERLET, banded in blue, green and red. Woven in a mill in the Markham area. The absence of a centre seam confirms the fact that this coverlet was not handwoven.

Ontario, York County, about 1870 963.1.2

54. JACQUARD COVERLET, "Bird's Nest" pattern in light red wool. Woven in a mill in the Niagara district. This coverlet had no centre seam.

Ontario, possibly Lincoln County, about 1870 960.93.3
Gift of Mrs. Verna Hall

55. JACQUARD COVERLET, blue and white, woven for Justine E. Hipple by Moses Grobb, Clinton Township.

Ontario, Lincoln County, dated 1872 964.93

56. JACQUARD or DRAWLOOM COVERLET. This blue and white coverlet is unusual in showing a mixture of the traditional geometric patterns, and the naturalistic ones that became popular with the introduction of the jacquard loom.

Ontario, Peel County, 19th century, 1st half 961.96
Gift of Miss Evelyn G. Follett

57. OVERSHOT COVERLET, blue and white. Cotton ground with wool pattern.

Ontario, Simcoe County, mid-19th century 959.93
Gift of Mrs. H. W. Chrysler

58. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with indigo blue wool pattern. Most of the overshot coverlets are woven so that the pattern blocks forming the motifs are connected diagonally. The less common method known as "rose fashion" has been used here to produce motifs that are unconnected to one another.

Ontario, Halton County, 19th century 3rd quarter 965.3.2

59. OVERSHOT COVERLET, greenish-blue cotton ground with pattern in rust-red wool. The use of coloured grounds in overshot coverlets occurs occasionally, and is usually found in areas of German settlement.

Ontario, probably York County, 19th century, 2nd quarter
Gift of Miss Isobel Neilly 945.36

60. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with pattern in red and green wools.

Ontario, Wellington County, 19th century, 3rd quarter
Gift of Miss Adelaide Lash Miller 962.67.69

61. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with pattern in red, blue and yellow wools. This coverlet from near Stratford was also woven "rose fashion", and was made on a loom with eight shafts rather than the usual four.

Ontario, Perth County, 19th century, 2nd quarter 964.80

62. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with wool pattern in indigo blue, red and deep yellow. This is a remarkably fine example of the patterning possibilities of this simple weave when a combination of colours is used. Woven near Dundas.

Ontario, Wentworth County, mid-19th century 949.64
Gift of Mrs. George Bowman, in memory of her husband, George Hills Bowman

63. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with wool pattern in indigo blue, red and pale yellow.

Ontario, Middlesex County, mid-19th century 964.184

64. OVERSHOT COVERLET, rust-red wool ground with blue wool pattern. Overshot coverlets made entirely of wool are only found occasionally. It is possible that they were once more common, but have worn out from use as blankets.

Ontario, Russell County, about 1875 962.137
Gift of Miss Sadie M. Fraser

65. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with indigo blue wool pattern.

Ontario, Lincoln County, 19th century, 3rd quarter 964.19

66. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with raspberry red wool pattern. Woven at Waterford.

Ontario, Norfolk County, mid-19th century 962.11
Gift of the Misses C. and E. Grindley

67. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with indigo blue wool pattern. This coverlet, woven near Hillsburgh, was the first example of Ontario handweaving in the Museum's collection. It shows the same pattern as the example set up on the loom.
Ontario, Wellington County, 1830-1840 941.32
Gift of Miss Florence McKinnon

68. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with pattern banded in red and blue wool. Woven at Keswick, North Gwillimbury Township.
Ontario, Simcoe County, 1839-1840 955.10.1
Gift of Mrs. O. D. Vaughan

69. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with indigo blue wool pattern.

Ontario, Prince Edward County, about 1820 945.33.1
Gift of Mrs. Charles Hamilton Mitchell

70. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with indigo blue wool pattern. This example is not of the normal type, but shows the possibilities available when a ten-shaft loom is used.

Ontario, Waterloo County, 19th century, 3rd quarter 959.268
Gift of The Arts and Crafts of Georgetown

71. DOUBLE-CLOTH COVERLET, blue and white, requiring a twenty-shaft loom to produce the five pattern blocks from which the motifs are formed. Woven at Markham.

Ontario, York County, about 1850 951.44
Gift of Miss Anne Marion Fox

72. DOUBLE-CLOTH COVERLET, blue and white. Sixteen shafts were required to produce the four pattern blocks of which the motifs are formed.

Ontario, Brant County, 19th century, 1st half 960.118
Gift of Mrs. F. A. Ballachey

73. DOUBLE-CLOTH COVERLET, blue and white. Sixteen shafts were required to produce the four pattern blocks of which the motifs are formed. Woven at Ayr.

Ontario, Waterloo County, mid-19th century 949.250

74. TWILL COVERLET requiring a sixteen-shaft loom. White cotton with light and dark blue, red, and green wools.

Ontario, Wellington County, mid-19th century 959.194

75. TWILL COVERLET requiring an eighteen-shaft loom. White cotton, light and dark blue, and red wools.

Ontario, Waterloo County, mid-19th century 954.4

76. SUMMER AND WINTER COVERLET, white cotton with indigo blue wool pattern.

Ontario, mid-19th century 952.46.1
Gift of the Ontario Spinners and Weavers Cooperative

77. TWILL COVERLET, requiring a sixteen-shaft loom. White cotton with deep indigo blue and rust-red wools. The date and the initials of the original owner are embroidered near the upper edge.

Ontario, Waterloo County, dated 1844 963.222.1

78. TWILL DIAPER COVERLET, blue and red wools. This was woven by Samuel Fry, Clinton Township, for his sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Moyer.

Ontario, Lincoln County, about 1845 955.80.1
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harold B. Burnham

79. STAR AND DIAMOND COVERLET, red and indigo blue wools. The block motifs replacing the usual diamonds between the stars are unusual.

Ontario, Waterloo County, mid-19th century 960.251

80. STAR AND DIAMOND COVERLET, white cotton and indigo blue wool, with the usual type of pattern.

Ontario, Waterloo County, mid-19th century 957.98
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harold B. Burnham

81. STAR AND DIAMOND COVERLET, white cotton with red and indigo blue wools.
Ontario, Perth County, mid-19th century 964.125
Gift of The Honourable Mr. Justice Wells

82. PIECED QUILT, made of woollen homespuns of the type used for clothing. This was made near Acton. Patterned quilts of these materials are not common.

Ontario, Wellington County, 19th century, 2nd quarter
Lent by Mrs. Keith Comfort

83. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with red wool pattern.

Nova Scotia, Digby County, mid-19th century
Lent by Miss Marion Stirrett

84. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with blue wool pattern.

New Brunswick, Queen's County, about 1840
Lent by Miss M. Patricia Jenkins

85. OVERSHOT COVERLET, cotton ground with red wool pattern.

Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, 19th century, 2nd half
Lent by Mrs. F. Mackley

86. PIECED QUILT, red and white. Patterns of this type based on circles are more difficult to work than those based on angular forms.

Nova Scotia, Annapolis County, 1860-1865
Lent by Mr. K. M. Smith

87. PIECED QUILT, red wool twill and white cotton. The pattern is known as "Double Irish Chain".

New Brunswick, Queen's County, about 1875
Lent by Mrs. I. A. Reevie

88. APPLIQUED QUILT of original design showing mounted Indians hunting deer. The maker lived on the Grand River, and invariably won first prize for her quilts at the Caledonia Fair.
Ontario. Haldimand County, about 1850
Lent by Mrs. Marjorie Larmon

89. APPLIQUED QUILT, of red and printed cottons made near Markham.

Ontario, York County, 1860-1870 964.191.1
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harold B. Burnham

90. PIECED QUILT, for a four-poster bed, made near Vineland. The pattern is called both "Mosaic Star" and "Star of Bethlehem".

Ontario, Lincoln County, mid-19th century 963.206
Gift of Mrs. Percy C. Band

91. DOUBLE-CLOTH COVERLET, blue and white. The warp is blue and white linens, the weft white cotton and indigo dyed wool. This coverlet is of a quality that has not been equalled by any others recorded by the Museum.

Ontario, Waterloo County, early 19th century
Lent by Mr. H. V. Betzner

92. WOMAN'S DRESS of brown wool homespun, made at Dunbarton. Clothing made of homespun woollen cloth is extremely rare, although many samples of material have survived.

Ontario, York County, late 1850's 959.272
Gift of Mr. Arthur Hunt

93. WOMAN'S DRESS of woollen homespun checked material. Made in Willoughby Township.

Ontario, Welland County, 1860-1870 L959.7.1
Lent by Mrs. W. E. P. DeRoche

94. HAND LOOM, used by Samuel Pentland, professional weaver, at Nile near Goderich.

Ontario, Huron County, about 1840-1845 947.62.1

95. OVERSHOT COVERLET, natural linen and brown wool.

Prince Edward Island, 19th century, 1st half
Lent by Mrs. Gerard Brett